THE PILGRIMS OF PLYMOUTH

BY

HENRY CABOT LODGE

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HENRY CABOT LODGE

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THE PILGRIMS OF PLYMOUTH

AN ADDRESS AT PLYMOUTH, MASSACHUSETTS
ON THE THREE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY
OF THEIR LANDING, DECEMBER 21, 1920

THE PILGRIMS OF PLYMOUTH

WE meet here to-day because the calendar tells us that three hundred years have elapsed since a small band of English men and women landed at this spot and set themselves to work to conquer the wilderness and found a state. Three centuries are but an indistinguishable point in the vast tracts of time dimly marked by geologic periods in the history of our planet. They are a negligible space in the thousands of years which have passed since man first appeared on the earth. Even within the narrow limits of recorded history they fill but a trifling place if we are concerned only with chronology. We live, however, in a comparative world. Geologically and even racially three centuries are not worth computing, but to the men and nations who have been concerned in the making of what is called modern history, dating from the beginning of the Renaissance in Italy, they extend very nearly to the visible horizon. If we go a step further and measure by man's own life and by the brief existence of the doers of the historic deed as well as of those who now try to recall the great event, our three centuries as we glance backward, like Shelley's "lone and level sands," stretch far away. In the familiar fable of the insects, whose term of life is but a day and whose most aged members are those who totter on to sunset, twelve hours is the test of time, and to them three

hundred years would seem like the æons through which the earth has passed during its unresting journey in stellar space. After all, our only measure must be the lives of the men who acted and of the men who celebrate, and to us the Pilgrims seem remote indeed. The solemn dignity of the past is as much theirs as if they had been those of the human race who drew the pictures in the caves of the Dordogne, or laid deep the foundations of the Pyramids. In any event, whether the three hundred years are absolutely a short period or relatively a long one the number of the centuries is not alone sufficient to determine their right to make men pause and consider them for a few moments at the date which marks their end. There is no more reason to celebrate the mere passage of time than to rejoice over the precession of the equinoxes. The value and meaning to be found in the ending of any artificial, calendar-made period exist only in the deed or the event which in some fashion has lived on in the minds of men through one or three or ten centuries. The act of commemoration or celebration must be justified by its subject. Thomas Parr is believed, on the authority of John Taylor, the Water Poet, to have lived over one hundred and fifty years, which is wholly unimportant except as an evidence of the possibilities of human longevity. Keats died before he had completed his twenty-sixth year, but he had created things of beauty which will be joys forever. Scott's principle of the "crowded hour of glorious life" which is worth "an age without a name" is the touch-

stone which will tell us whether a man, a deed, or an event is current gold indeed. Thus shall we discover the real character of the event for the sake of which we turn aside from the noisy traffic of the moment in order that we may look upon it and meditate upon its meaning. In this way we shall learn whether we celebrate something of world effect or an incident of the past which merely touches the memories or the pride of a neighborhood.

Can there be any question that the landing of those whom we affectionately call "Pilgrims" upon the edge of the North American wilderness meets the test of Scott's famous lines? I believe that, among those who take the trouble to think, there can be but one answer to this inquiry. Let us, however, go a step further and apply certain other tests.

Seventy years ago a distinguished English historian published a book entitled "Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World," a work of authority which still holds its place in literature. If Sir Edward Creasy had lived until 1920 he would undoubtedly have slightly increased the number of his battles, but that would in no wise affect the leading impression suggested by his book. The first thought awakened by the title as well as by the book itself is one of astonishment that an expert student and historian, surveying the long story of the well-nigh perpetual fighting which has darkened and reddened the movement of mankind across the centuries, could in 1851 find only fifteen battles to which he felt, after much con-

sideration and weighing of testimony, that he could properly apply the word "decisive." Only fifteen battles out of the thousands, alas, which have been fought by men were selected by a competent judge as having by their result settled the fate of nations or permanently affected the history of the world.

As with battles so it is with other events great and small, the creatures of each succeeding day which, ever since man has attempted to make any record of himself and his doings, have gone whirling past in countless swarms only to be engulfed in the relentless ocean of time. At the moment they all, even the most minute, were of meaning and concern to some one, perhaps to many more than one among the children of men, and they are, nearly all, as dead and forgotten as those whom they grieved or gladdened at the instant when they flitted by. Almost infinitely small is the proportion which have even found a record, whether carved on stone or set down in books and manuscripts. Of those thus preserved, how few, how very few, stand out clearly to us across the ages or the centuries as decisive, unforgetable, because they determined the course of history and gave a lasting direction to the fortunes of mankind! They rise before us as we try to look back over the dim, receding past like distant mountain-peaks where the rose of sunset lingers, or solitary light-towers set above reefs and shoals in lonely seas.

When we approach an anniversary the first question which confronts us, then, is whether it holds a place

among the rare events which may be called "decisive," or is memorable only to those who celebrate it. The inquiry, as a rule, is easily answered by a little reflection, and the great and decisive events of history are usually beyond dispute. No one, for example, can question that Greek thought has profoundly influenced all Western civilization for twenty-five hundred years, and therefore the repulse of the Persians, the spread of the Greek colonies to the westward, the conquests of Alexander reaching to the borders of India, which gave opportunity and scope to Greek culture, were in the largest sense decisive events in the history of the world. There can be no doubt that the battle of Châlons, which saved western Europe from the savage hordes of Asia, and the battle of Tours, which arrested the advance of Islam, were in the highest degree "decisive" events. Seven hundred years ago John of England signed at Runnymede a certain document known as the Magna Carta. The last centenary came in June, 1915, in the midst of the war with Germany, when men had no time to give to the celebration of past events, and yet the signing of the Great Charter was quietly but duly and fittingly noticed and commemorated, both in England and the United States. Even in that hour of peril and confusion people did not forget what had happened seven hundred years before, because on that June day a deed was done which has affected the development of the English-speaking people down to the present moment, and thus has been decisive in world history. The endless and fruitless wars of England in

her attempt to conquer France, which fill the old chronicles, have faded away, and the signing of a document remains still vivid to men. It is equally certain that the voyage of Columbus was an event, momentous alike to the Old World and the New, and the great adventurer has two continents as his monument.

I can hear, as I give these few illustrations of the principle I seek to establish, the peevish, meaningless objection that if Miltiades had not won Marathon, if Alexander had never existed, if Aëtius had failed at Châlons and Charles Martel at Tours, if the Barons of England had not controlled King John, if Columbus had never reached America, somebody else would have done all these things, for the time was ripe and they would surely have come to pass. Envy and jealousy are not confined to the present. In one form or another they reach across the abysm of time, and no honored grave is safe from their creeping attack. Moreover, the hypotheses of history attractive to certain minds are often ingenious, occasionally amusing and suggestive, almost invariably profitless and unremunerative. The "might have beens" have no claim to celebration. That which alone is entitled to this high honor is "what was." The actual deed and the men who did the deed which "breaks the horizon's level line," not those who did not do it, even if they thought about it, alone deserve honor, reverence, and commemoration.

Can we, then, justly place what happened here at Plymouth, and the men and women to whom we owe the great act, in the small, high class of "decisive" events

due to the actual doers of great deeds? Clearly, I think we can. Jamestown and Plymouth were the cornerstones of the foundations upon which the great fabric of the United States has been built up, and the United States is to-day one of the dominant factors in the history and in the future of the world of men. The nation thus brought into being has affected the entire course of Western civilization, and largely helped to determine its fate, which, shaken and clouded by the most desolating of wars, is now trembling in the balance. Saratoga stands with Marathon and Waterloo in Sir Edward Creasy's book as one of the decisive battles of the world. There is no need to go further to find the meaning in history of what the Pilgrims did.

I shall not attempt to rehearse the story of the little band of men and women who landed here on a December day three hundred years ago. It is as familiar to our ears as a twice-told tale, as ready on our lips as household words. It has awakened the imagination of poet and painter and novelist. It has engaged the attention and the research of antiquarians and writers of history. Societies have been formed to trace out the descendants of the Pilgrims, and those who can claim them as ancestors would not change their lineage for any that could be furnished by the compilers of peerages.

They were humble folk, for the most part, these passengers of the Mayflower — handicraftsmen, fishers, ploughmen, with some wise leaders possessed of education and who had held established position in their native

land. But the fact is too often overlooked that these same humble folk were the offspring of a great period filled with the exuberant, adventurous spirit of youth, moving and stirring in every field of human thought and human activity. They were the contemporaries of Raleigh, of Shakespeare, and of Bacon, and were the true children of their wonderful age, with all its hopes and daring courage strong within them. We know how they started, imbued and uplifted by the deep resolve to worship God in their own way, which to them meant more than all the world beside could offer. We see them leaving the villages of Yorkshire and East Anglia, driven back from the shore, arrested, harried by soldiers, finally making their way to Holland, settling in Amsterdam and then in Leyden. A few years pass in peace and quiet, but the thought that they are losing their nationality and their language preys upon them, and they prayerfully and very solemnly determine that they will preserve these precious possessions by seeking a home in the New World, and still keep secure the opportunity to worship God in the way that is their own. It is a terrifying adventure. Some will not face it, stay behind, are absorbed in the population of Holland, and disappear from history. But others have a finer courage, and go forth determined henceforth to fill a place not to be forgotten by coming generations. Through many difficulties they procure two ships, the Speedwell at Delftshaven, the famous Mayflower at Southampton, and slowly make their way down the channel to Plymouth. Further delays and obstacles

surround them. The Speedwell is forced to return, and it is not until September 16, on our reckoning, that the Mayflower sets out alone upon her long journey. Two months nearly are occupied by the voyage across the stormy waters of the North Atlantic and in searching the coast for a landing. It is the 21st of November when they disembark at Provincetown. Then comes a month of exploring the neighboring coast, the signing of the compact, and the landing which we have elected to celebrate on December 21. During the shortest days, at the worst season, on the edge of the unbroken wilderness they planted themselves by the seaside, and the great experiment began. Famine and disease met them at the threshold. Half the people died during that cruel winter. But they held on, clinging desperately to the land which they had chosen, and the grip then taken was never broken. Never after that first awful winter, marked forever by the clustering graves on Cole's Hill, did they go backward. There was still much suffering to be endured, many dangers to be faced, perils from the Indians, failure of support, betrayals, even, by those in England who should have sustained them. But they held on and advanced. It was a painfully slow advance, but always the movement was forward. As told in Bradford's truly wonderful journal and in "Winslow's Relation" it is an epic poem written in seventeenth-century English, in the language of Shakespeare and Milton, because they had no other. For ten years they were the only English settlement north of the Chesapeake — the only settlement

in that vast northern region which rose high above the level of a trading post or fishing station. They farmed their lands, ploughed and fished and traded; but they also established their church and worshipped God in their own fashion, founded a state and organized an efficient government. They were masters of their fate; they had begun the conquest of the wilderness; their march was ever onward and their hold was never relaxed. Ten years passed, and then in 1629 and 1630 came Endicott and Winthrop to Salem and Boston. The powerful Puritan organization with its twenty thousand immigrants in the next decade had begun. The perils of Plymouth were over. Henceforth they were sheltered and overshadowed by their strong neighbors and friends on Massachusetts Bay. In 1643 they joined the New England Confederation, and their history was merged in that of the other, larger colonies. Before the century closed, the existing fact was embodied in law, and Plymouth became part of Massachusetts. But what the Pilgrims had achieved in those first ten years could never be absorbed in the work of other men. The deed they did, the victory they had won alone upon the shores of New England, stands out monumentally upon the highway of history for after ages to admire and reverence, and it was all their own. I shall say no more at this point of the Pilgrim of Plymouth as he lived on earth. I shall not now or later indulge in needless eulogy, still less shall I seek to draw his frailties from their dread abode. My only purpose is to try to determine what his history has been since the grave

closed over him; what he has accomplished among the generations which have followed him.

That which now concerns us most, as it seems to me, is, first, to know what has come from the work of the Pilgrims who thus influenced history and affected the fate of Western civilization as they fought for life and struggled forward and suffered and died on the spot they called New Plymouth. Next, and more important, we must consider just what they were, these Pilgrims, and what meaning they had for our predecessors and now have for us. Above all, let us find out if possible what lessons they teach which will help us in the present and aid us to meet the imperious future ever knocking at the door. Nations which neglect their past are not worthy of a future, and those which live exclusively upon their past have the marks of decadence stamped upon them. We must look before and after, and from the doers of high deeds, from the makers of the rare events decisive in history, we must seek for light and leading, for help in facing the known and in shaping as best we may the forces which govern the unknown.

Before we undertake to summarize the Pilgrims themselves, and try rightly to judge their qualities of mind and character, I think we can best open the way to them and to their meaning to-day by considering the movement of opinion in regard to them and what they did. In this way alone, I think, shall we be able to see them in proper perspective and with a due sense of proportion.

The realization of the importance of the Pilgrims' work

and of their place in history came but slowly in England; not, in fact, until Macaulay and Carlyle put the Puritans into their true position in the period they so largely controlled. Yet the Plymouth settlers themselves had deep down in their hearts a sense of the magnitude of what they were doing which is at once strange and impressive. I must turn as usual to the imagination of the poet to find fit expression of what I mean. When Lowell makes Concord Bridge "break forth and prophesy," he speaks first of the earliest time, of the—

> Brown foundlin' o' the woods, whose baby-bed
> Was prowled roun' by the Injun's cracklin' tread,
> An' who grew'st strong thru shifts an' wants an' pains,
> Nussed by stern men with empires in their brains,
> Who saw in vision their young Ishmel strain
> With each hard hand a vassal ocean's mane.

There we have in a few noble and echoing words an arresting impression which seizes upon the attention of any one who studies carefully the journals and correspondence of the founders of Plymouth. Gradually as we read there comes sharply outlined before us, visible through the mist of details concerning supplies and ships, money difficulties and trading ventures, Indians and the farms and fortunes of the little colony from day to day, a vivid picture of the "stern men with empires in their brains." It is not set down in black and white, but it is clearer than anything else, to those who look into it with considerate eyes, that these men, the leaders especially, had a profound consciousness that they were engaged

in a vastly greater task than establishing a colony. They felt in the depths of their being that they were laying the foundation of an empire — of a mighty nation. The outlines were all dim, the details did not exist, but the great, luminous vision of a picture they would never see was there, and they beheld it as they gazed upward, looking far beyond the dark forest, the unbroken solitude, and the wastes of ocean at their gates. We cannot escape the belief that these Pilgrims in their hearts were confident that, as expressed in the verse of a true poet[1] of our own time, what they said and did would yet be heard "like a new song that waits for distant years." We seem, in the words of their great contemporary then so recently dead, to catch a glimpse, in these poor struggling people of the Mayflower, of

> The prophetic soul
> Of the wide world dreaming of things to come.

The vision faded when the pioneers passed away — the eponymous and autochthonous heroes, as the Greeks would have called them if they had come up out of the darkness where myths are born and history never written.

And there is something besides this dream of empire which, as we study the ancient faded records, leaps out like Shakespeare's "golden word" and sinks deep into our consciousness. This was the quick and strong attachment of these men and women for the untamed land

[1] Edwin Arlington Robinson.

which had greeted them so harshly and which made to them no glittering promises. Why did this happen? Whence came this feeling for this New World, as unknown to them as to their ancestors, destitute alike of traditions and of the tender associations which bind men to the country of their birth? They were loyal to their race, to their language, to England and to England's King. But from the first their love and hope were fastened here in America. The reason is not, I think, far to seek. They had crossed the ocean primarily that they might be able to worship God as seemed best in their own eyes, but they also meant to free themselves from the Old World, where oppression had been their portion, and henceforth know no home but America. They meant to be Americans, although they probably never used the word, and to have their home here and make this country first in their thoughts as in their affections. However much they suffered, they seem never to have repined. They meant to leave England which they loved, and Holland which had so kindly treated them, and they cast no longing, lingering look behind. In them we can see that even in those first bleak years the passion for America had cast out the passion for Europe, and in the process of the years grew ever stronger, more compelling, more overmastering, as colonies became states and states a nation, rising unhelped but surely to the perilous heights of world power.

These deep but unspoken and undefined emotions and aspirations of the Pilgrims did not sweep on through the

succeeding years with ever-gathering strength. The waves sank and rose; the halts came in the onward march, as is common in the progress of forces which must travel far before they ultimately move the world. This was apparent even in the days which followed the gradual passing away of the Pilgrims. Success and security enlarged the daily interests of life, hard and simple as it was; worldly hopes grew stronger; the children ceased to dream the dreams or see clearly the visions vouchsafed to their fathers, — to those who had made existence in America possible, — but the spirit of the first comers was never lost, and deep down in their very being guided and led the succeeding generations.

The hundredth anniversary of the landing came and went, so far as we can learn, quite unnoticed and unmarked. The far-flung aspirations of the beginners had gone; the backward, penetrating glance of history, of the seekers of the buried treasures of the past, had not yet come. Half a century more was to elapse before the fact that here in Plymouth something had once happened which merited celebration and made such demand for the outward signs of remembrance as to insist upon a visible manifestation. In January, 1769, a club was started by twelve young men of Plymouth, and in the following December they decided to have a dinner on December 22 in commemoration of the landing of the Pilgrims. Accordingly, upon that day there was a procession, and then a dinner was eaten and toasts were given in honor of the leaders among the founders of the settle-

ment. The following year, on the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary, the people here again held a celebration, and this time they had an oration described in the record as "words spoken with modesty and firmness" by Edward Winslow, and there was also a poem by Alexander Scammell. These commemorations went on through the years of the Revolution, until 1780, and then came an unexplained gap of twelve years until 1793, when the celebration of the anniversary was again renewed, and continued thereafter with the omission only of 1799. The ceremonies expanded with the years, and a discourse by the clergyman and an address by some outsider of distinction became recognized accompaniments of the proceedings. Politics entered into the speech-making, and the toasts and the partakers in them made it very clear that while they celebrated as Americans they did not forget that they were also Federalists.

In Boston the commemorations of the Pilgrims suggested in 1774 began with a formal and public celebration in 1798. There was an elaborate dinner, a very long list of toasts, including many which were both contemporary and political, much speech-making, and an "Elegant and Patriotic Ode" by Mr. Thomas Paine was duly sung, doubtless with ardent enthusiasm.

From these modest beginnings in Plymouth and Boston the celebrations of what came to be called "Forefathers' Day" multiplied beyond enumeration, following the migrations of the Mayflower descendants and of the children of New England across the continent, until now

in ever-increasing numbers the anniversary of the landing in 1620 is marked and celebrated with each recurring year from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The deeds of the little band of hunted men and women who fled from England to Holland and thence to the New World have come into their own. They are, as Henry V prophesied on the eve of Agincourt, "freshly remembered," and have taken a place in the thoughts of uncounted thousands in a manner permitted only to an event decisive in the world's history. It would be quite impossible to trace or even to count these endless acts of commemoration, interesting as it would be to show in this way the development of public opinion about the results of the Plymouth landing as the accumulating years made the scattered little settlements of the Atlantic coast into a great nation, and ever threw into higher relief the achievement of the followers and companions of Bradford and Winslow. It would be hardly less impossible to review the addresses made by well-known men upon the coming of the Mayflower, and analyze and consider the critical conclusions and the thoughts thus expressed. In the roll of those who have spoken gravely and seriously about the foundation of Plymouth is included a very large representation of the men who in our history have attained high distinction in the pulpit, at the bar, in literature, and in public life. You will find there orators and poets, philosophers and historians, Presidents, Governors of States, Senators, and leaders of the House of Representatives. It is an imposing list not without significance.

Limited by time and space, I shall call up to remembrance only one past celebration and only one speaker who made that particular day famous, and who was at once interpreter of the past and prophet of the future. That occasion and the man who then spoke stand out very distinctly and very radiantly against the background of the dead years, charged with much deep meaning to all who consider them and above all competitors however eminent.

In 1820, on the two hundredth anniversary of the landing, Daniel Webster delivered what has always been known as the "Plymouth Oration." We are apt unconsciously, I believe, in looking backward to the days which are gone, to think of a century as a whole, and if we are trying to picture to ourselves at a given moment a certain man, we are prone to treat him as if his life was at that instant complete as we now know it. If we are to judge rightly and really draw forth the lesson we perchance are seeking, we must force ourselves to remember just what sort of a world it was at the historic moment which is in our thoughts, and not confuse the actors or the occasion with after years familiar in history to us, but an unknown future to them.

The year 1820 began with the death of George III, an old man, blind, demented, almost forgotten, a pathetic figure not without suggestion to the moralist. He had come to the throne in 1760; he was the King of the elder and younger Pitt, of the Foxes, father and son, of Burke and Johnson, of Reynolds and Garrick and Goldsmith. He was an eighteenth-century king. George IV, of un-

savory memory, a child of the eighteenth century, was King of England when Webster spoke at Plymouth, and a Bourbon was reigning in France as Louis XVIII. Europe just then had gone back to the old days and the old systems, and the French Revolution seemed to those in power like an evil dream. Metternich, at least, and many others were convinced that the Revolution was a nightmare which had passed as a watch in the night, and that everything was henceforth to go on in the good old way. The successful revolt of the American colonies had passed before their eyes and taught them nothing. From the uprising of France and from the Napoleonic wars they had learned little more, frightful as the shock had been, for had they not finally defeated Napoleon and crushed democracy at Waterloo? They were unable to see that the failure of the French Revolution was only apparent. The force of the Revolution had passed into the hands of a great military genius who betrayed its principles and sought merely to erect on the ruins of the old autocracies a world-wide despotism of his own. France under Napoleon went to defeat at Waterloo, but the revolution which France had wrought was not conquered; the work the French had done a quarter of a century earlier could not be undone any more than the American colonies could be returned to England. The democratic movement was not crushed on the plains of Waterloo, but was only freed from its most dangerous foe, born and equipped in its own household. In fact, it was the uprising of the people in the countries conquered by

Napoleon which alone enabled banded Europe to defeat him. Metternich and his emperors and kings mistook a lull in the storm for a lasting calm. They did not realize that they were in the centre of the cyclone, and that the other side must yet be traversed. They found it out in 1830 and 1848, but in 1820 they believed that all was well, and that the old system would go on better than ever and for an indefinite period. Had they not established their Holy Alliance to control all nations and put an end to every attempt to assert the rights of the people? They did not understand the portents even then to be seen in the world about them. England in those very years was beginning to awaken to the perils of the Alliance called "Holy," and was preparing to leave it. Far-away states in South America were insisting that they would not return to the domination of Spain, and presently a voice was to be heard from the northern continent of the New World declaring, with England in full sympathy, that the Old World was not to control the New. Very shocking all this to Metternich and Polignac and the Czar of Russia and other right-thinking persons, and yet not to be gainsaid. Still nothing was learned, and in 1820 the worst qualities of the eighteenth century seemed to have returned to power.

In that same year, moreover, no alterations of deep effect upon the daily affairs of men had yet arrived. A little steamboat had made its way up the Hudson; others were appearing, but sails still carried the world's traffic over the wide oceans. The first operating steam railroad

was still ten years in the future, and twenty years were to elapse before the coming of the telegraph—the two discoveries which were to make a greater change in human environment than anything which had happened since the wheel, the hollow boat, and the alphabetical signs for language had broken upon the world of men. People still relied upon horses and upon the winds for travel, and upon written letters for communication when separated. The modes and habits of life were still substantially the same as in the colonial days, and change is finally brought home to men only when it actually touches the routine and habits of their daily lives. As its restorers conceived it, the eighteenth century was really dead, but the outside manifestations which belonged to it were still unaltered, and it was with an eighteenth-century atmosphere about him that Webster rose to speak at Plymouth, as much so as the coach which had brought him to his destination was a vehicle of the same period. Stage-coach and atmosphere were alike on the very verge of disappearance; only ten years separated them from George Stephenson's railroad and from certain July days of 1830 in Paris, which Sir Walter Besant declared marked the real ending of the previous century, although the calendar had disposed of it long before.

But calendars are arbitrary things and do not always register all the facts correctly. It is with the real, the underlying conditions that we are concerned when we try to revive the bygone scene witnessed in Plymouth in 1820 in order that we may see with the eyes of im-

agination the man who made that particular anniversary memorable.

The people who gathered here to listen to the orator of the day did not look upon the Webster so familiar to us, who looms so large during the succeeding thirty years of the country's history. In 1820 Webster was only thirty-eight years old. He stood before his audience in the very prime of his early manhood. The imposing presence, the massive head, the wonderful voice, the dark, deep-set eyes burning, as Carlyle said, with a light like dull anthracite furnaces, the mouth "accurately closed," were then as they were to the end arresting, and held the attention of all who looked and listened. But the face was still smooth, the deep lines and tragic aspect of the latest portraits were lacking.

> The hope of unaccomplished years
> Seemed large and lucid round his brow.

But they were "unaccomplished years," and one cannot help wondering how many then present even dimly guessed what he who spoke to them was to be, and to what heights he was destined to climb. In 1820 his public life had consisted of four years' service as member of Congress from New Hampshire, service distinguished but not extraordinary. He had removed to Boston and there begun his practice at the bar of Massachusetts. His second period in the House, his long years in the Senate, his service as Secretary of State were all in the future. Ten years were to pass before he reached his zenith in the Reply to Hayne

—one of those rare speeches which has become an inseparable part of our history. The speech to the jury in the White murder case was yet to be made, and that which he was to deliver at Plymouth was the first of the occasional addresses which so added to his fame, and which generations of schoolboys were fated to recite. In his profession alone had he already given absolute proof of his future eminence. His argument in the Dartmouth College case had put him in the front rank at the American bar, but the world at large probably had little knowledge of the closing sentences of that argument, which must have revealed to those who heard him and to the few outsiders of penetrating and critical judgment that a great orator as well as a great lawyer was before them. If the Plymouth audience did not understand—and it was hardly possible that they should—that they were about to hear one of the great orators of all time, they must have suspected, when Mr. Webster closed, that they had listened to an unusual man making a speech quite beyond anything they had ever heard before.

We do not need to criticise or analyze the speech—the Plymouth Oration, to use the old-fashioned and more sonorous words. All that concerns us is to learn, if we can, Webster's attitude of mind in 1820, and what meaning the anniversary had to him, representing as he did the best thought of the time. Let me quote to you without any apology the fine and stately sentences with which he closed, for they are addressed directly to us, and it is for us to make reply. Here is his peroration:

"The hours of this day are rapidly flying, and this occasion will soon be passed. Neither we nor our children can expect to behold its return. They are in the distant regions of futurity; they exist only in the all-creating power of God, who shall stand here a hundred years hence to trace, through us, their descent from the Pilgrims, and to survey, as we have now surveyed, the progress of their country during the lapse of a century. We would anticipate their concurrence with us in our sentiments of deep regard for our common ancestors. We would anticipate and partake the pleasure with which they will then recount the steps of New England's advancement. On the morning of that day, although it will not disturb us in our repose, the voice of acclamation and gratitude, commencing on the Rock of Plymouth, shall be transmitted through millions of the sons of the Pilgrims, till it lose itself in the murmurs of the Pacific seas.

"We would leave for the consideration of those who shall then occupy our places some proof that we hold the blessings transmitted from our fathers in just estimation; some proof of our attachment to the cause of good government, and of civil and religious liberty; some proof of a sincere and ardent desire to promote everything which may enlarge the understandings and improve the hearts of men. And when, from the long distance of a hundred years, they shall look back upon us, they shall know, at least, that we possessed affections, which, running backward and warming with gratitude for what our ancestors have done for our happiness, run forward also

to our posterity, and meet them with cordial salutation ere yet they have arrived on the shore of being.

"Advance, then, ye future generations! We would hail you, as you rise in your long succession, to fill the places which we now fill, and to taste the blessings of existence where we are passing, and soon shall have passed, our own human duration. We bid you welcome to this pleasant land of the fathers. We bid you welcome to the healthful skies and the verdant fields of New England. We greet your accession to the great inheritance which we have enjoyed. We welcome you to the blessings of good government and religious liberty. We welcome you to the treasures of science and the delights of learning. We welcome you to the transcendent sweets of domestic life, to the happiness of kindred, and parents, and children. We welcome you to the immeasurable blessings of rational existence, the immortal hope of Christianity, and the light of everlasting truth!"

Across the century comes to us the voice which so moved and charmed those who heard it. The appeal is to us, to the Americans who are now here upon the earth, and to no others. What have we to say in answer? What message do Webster's words convey to us? What meaning did he find in the work of the Pilgrims, and how did he interpret their simple and momentous story? How far do we go with him, where do our time and belief agree, and where do they contrast with his? What message does the Mayflower with its precious freight bring to us, and what help can it give us when, like Webster, we

bequeath the next century to those who come after us? Let us in our own way try as best we may to make reply.

That which strikes us most forcibly is that Webster, standing here in the still lingering atmosphere of the eighteenth century, and with an eighteenth-century background, speaks throughout with the voice of the nineteenth century. The dominant note of the whole address is of the nineteenth century. The nineteenth-century spirit pervades all he said, and the great characteristic of that spirit was in varying forms the belief in progress, in the perfectibility of man. With all he says of the Pilgrims we are in full accord. We can add nothing to the splendor of his praise, we assuredly would take nothing from it. But in the very beginning of the sentences I have quoted he speaks of surveying the progress of the country as the uppermost thought. We must not forget that the idea of the continuous progress of man was then very recent, and we must carefully remember to draw the distinction which Webster failed to draw between the general recognition of the historic fact of progress familiar to antiquity and the idea of progress as a law governing humanity and constantly operating until the race should have vanished and the earth grown cold. The fact of progress is one thing, the law of progress is quite another and very different. A volume would be needed to set forth the arguments and subtle distinctions of the speculative thinkers, philosophers, and men of science in the eighteenth century who gradually developed

the idea of progress as a law. Not until the latter part of that century were the conception and the law really formulated, and even then they were by no means perfected. The most striking point in Webster's peroration was his appeal to posterity, because the care for posterity was one of the last propositions added to the law of progress, and yet it was the capstone of the edifice, since the law if it existed was inevitably altruistic, and was chiefly and necessarily concerned with future generations. This in itself shows how completely the idea of a law of progress and a belief in the evolution of mankind had either consciously or unconsciously taken possession of Webster's mind and heart. Not historic progress, nor material progress, nor progress in knowledge alone, but political, moral, spiritual, and intellectual progress, all these, and more, were included in the idea of human progress which did not perish at Waterloo, but was fated to be the ruling principle of the nineteenth century, the spirit of the century just ended, and of which we must give an account as Webster demanded. We can see now the beautiful vision gleaming through the red mists of the French Revolution, and behold it shining forth in the poems of Shelley. An exiled victim of political intolerance, he wrote:

> The world's great age begins anew,
> The golden years return,
> The earth doth like a snake renew
> Her winter weeds outworn;
> Heaven smiles and faiths and empires gleam
> Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

Shelley was influenced, no doubt, by the Greek theory of returning cycles of civilizations rising to great heights only to decay and fall. But none the less noble is the expression he here gives to the spirit which neither the English reaction, nor the genius of Napoleon, nor the battle of Waterloo could crush or extinguish. By its very nature it was able to survive defeat because it inevitably carried optimism with it, and it could not fail to appeal to masses of men who knew nothing of details, but who were moved by a doctrine which awakened hope for better things in a none too cheerful world.

Webster's Plymouth Oration is optimistic throughout. It is instinct with the spirit of the nineteenth century; with the conception of progress as it was finally perfected in the coming years. The only cloud that Webster sees on the horizon is slavery, which is described with all the power of his eloquence in the most famous passage of his speech. He saw plainly and with statesmanlike prevision the peril involved in slavery which threatened the future of his country, and he appealed to the spirit of the age against it. Even he could not guess that the spirit of the age would finally remove this curse from the land in a way which above all others he dreaded, and which darkly overshadowed his closing years. But this was the only black spot in the picture, and it is not surprising that, as he portrayed the early days of privation, suffering, and struggle, reviewed the growth of the colonies, depicted the glory of the war for independence, and drew the contrast with the young nation before him advancing over

the continent with leaps and bounds, his pride as an American should have risen and his confidence in the future have become unrestrained. For thirty memorable years he was to play a large part in the history of his time, and we to whom he appealed in 1820 can look back not only upon those years, but upon many more which have come and gone since he died at Marshfield. We can judge how far his hopes have been fulfilled, and inquire, before we attempt to bring the Plymouth landing into relation with our own present and future, what the spirit of the age with which Webster was imbued has achieved as it has passed on across the hundred years which separate us from him when, in 1820, he spoke here at Plymouth.

Every century, apparently, has a poor opinion of its immediate predecessor. The generations which began with the nineteenth century and those which came up in it, growing with its growth and strengthening with its strength, were unsparing in condemnation of all pertaining to the eighteenth. To the liberal and the reformer the century which gave us our independence seemed a period of oppression and wrong, of the government of kings and oligarchies. It was a time when there were no popular rights, and when men persecuted in the name of a religion in which many of the persecutors had themselves ceased to believe. Its heirs declared that it was an immoral age socially and politically, and the altruists that it was heartless and selfish. Carlyle held a protracted commination service over its remains, although he was anything

but a worshipper of his own time. He set the fashion for many lesser men, and the poor eighteenth century had no friends. The romantic movement swept the eighteenth-century literature into the dust-heaps, and treated its architecture with the same contempt which the eighteenth century itself had shown to the Gothic buildings which they spoke of as the work of barbarians. Horace Walpole, eighteenth-century to the backbone, was looked upon in his own day as a mere eccentric because he admired and imitated Gothic architecture, and wrote the first fantastic and wildly romantic story which obtained a wide celebrity. Even the furniture of our great-grandfathers was broken up or hidden in garrets and kitchens, and if kept in use at all it was only with an apology on account of sentiment.

Yet even before a hundred years had passed men began to see that as in other portions of human history there was something to be said for this decried and much-abused period which had given to the world, among others, George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. Was it not, after all, the century of the successful revolt of the American colonies which began the democratic movement; of the thinkers and philosophers who were gradually evolving and formulating the law of progress which was to rule in the approaching years; of the French Revolution which set nations free and broke beyond repair the despotisms large and small which held Europe in their grasp? Was it not the era of Voltaire and Rousseau and the encyclopedists, who, whatever we may think of

them individually or of their characters and methods, fought against intolerance and for the freedom of thought and conscience? Eighteenth-century literature is now reassuming its proper place. Its art is once more prized and valued, its furniture is treasured; fine examples of it are almost priceless, and, without sacrificing our profound admiration of the wondrous art of the mediæval builders of cathedrals, we have readopted the architecture of the Louis and the Georges with all its classic forms as that best suited in taste and construction to the needs and desires of modern life.

Now, indeed, are the tables turned. The nineteenth century at this moment appears to be sadly out of fashion. There seems to be none so poor as to do it reverence. It does not even awaken the vigorous hostility which our grandfathers and fathers showed to the eighteenth century; it is satirized, laughed at, and derided. Its furniture, the exponent of domestic taste, is absolutely scorned, quite justly, no doubt, for a wider knowledge condemns it on general principles, and even sentiment cannot defend it. Its art is likewise banned as entirely beyond excuse, although it is not well to be too wholesale and to forget the Barbizon school and some of the romantics and pre-Raphaelites. The nineteenth-century literature fares little better. Its hold upon the people and upon the affections of the great mass of those who read cannot be shaken, but that is set down by advanced persons as a proof of popular ignorance. The critics who dread above all things not to be thought modern, and who are quick

to mistake the chirp of the cricket for the song of the birds, those who cannot hear

> . . . the bards sublime ;
> Whose distant footsteps echo
> Through the corridors of time

have only a sneer, or words of pity or patronage, for a century which began with Coleridge and Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley and Keats, and included in its course Victor Hugo, Emerson and Clough, Tennyson, Browning and Swinburne, Poe and Whitman. They are disposed to spare the last two because they are pleased to think one decadent and the other amorphous, but there is little mercy for the rest. They remember very vividly the deplorable ultra-Victorian line at the end of Enoch Arden —

> . . . the little port
> Had never seen a costlier funeral,

and forget that the same great poet wrote "Ulysses" and "The Lotus-Eaters" and "In Memoriam" and "Maud," which will remain in all their beauty while English poetry exists. And some of the poetasters of the day follow suit and join the cry. They despise form, for, if they accepted the forms and standards consecrated by the genius of men from the beginning of literature, they would not write at all, and formlessness is their chief reliance, because in this way they can best startle, shock, or amaze, and thereby draw an attention otherwise lacking. It is not that they produce new forms, ever to be

welcomed and studied, but that they reject all forms, and this it is which makes them such severe judges. If we turn to the realm of fiction it must be remembered that the nineteenth century was the age of Jane Austen and the Waverley Novels, of Dickens and Thackeray and Hawthorne, to mention only a few of those who stand out as most purely and conspicuously the representatives of their time. They had their defects, easily to be discovered and pointed out, but they added to the world of imagination a host of men and women, the creations of their genius, who will ever be the undying companions of men, and keep their place with those whom Shakespeare and Cervantes gave the world to help and to rejoice humanity. In France it was the age of Balzac, and it is difficult to conceive what modern French literature would have been in the field of fiction without that mighty genius, or what a deduction there would have been made from human happiness if we had been deprived of Chicot and the Three Musketeers.

I do not say this word in defence of the century in which a large part of the lives of many of us have been passed because I desire to be *laudator temporis acti,* a rôle peculiarly distasteful to me. On the contrary, I earnestly wish to

> Keep the young generations in hail,
> And bequeath them no tumbled house.

The first step for those who come after us, and who will, I trust, do better than we have done in our time with

the coming century which will be theirs, is to appraise with justice and discrimination the preceding period to which they are the heirs. To consider the near past without prejudice is essential to the success of those who live in the immediate present and are to be the trustees and guardians of the closely approaching future.

I have used literature and art in their varied forms merely for illustration and as a plea for moderation when the preceding century is led out for execution. But there are more serious questions and also far deeper meanings in the great century which has so recently gone. We may reject at once the idols of that period, apparent respectability and the steadfast ignoring of anything which by any stretch of the imagination could be called improper or coarse or indelicate. These limitations upon art and literature were both regarded as fetishes, and they often injured great work and laid the time open to the charge of being given to cant, an accusation unhappily not without foundation.

But none of these things affect materially or even touch the deep underlying principle which dominated the nineteenth century and which still has a commanding influence upon the minds of men, especially and naturally in America. The spirit of the nineteenth century was belief in progress. "Always toward perfection is the mighty movement," said Herbert Spencer, who asserted that progress was a universal law, and the Darwinian theory was held to be the scientific demonstration of its immutability. As the century passed on, the per-

petual progress of man was confused with the material development of the time. Material progress has in truth gone far beyond anything which Webster predicted or even dreamed to be possible. Steam, electricity, and the unresting labors of applied and mechanical science have utterly changed the conditions of man's life on earth. In the last fifty years there has been a more profound alteration in human environment, a greater difference created, than in all the centuries which elapsed between Marathon and Gettysburg. Wealth was torn from the earth with a speed which is stupefying; industry marvellously expanded; transport and communication well-nigh annihilated distance; and fortunes were piled up which went far beyond the wildest dreams of avarice. The teachings of the Manchester school discovered the reign of universal peace in a trade formula, and the fevered search for quick profits and unlimited money all pressed the spirit of progress down toward a cash basis.

But these were but the region clouds passing over the essential spirit of the age, which was the belief that the movement of mankind was ever upwards and onwards; that men would continually rise "on stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things." This was the spirit which both in England and the United States turned the thoughts of men and women to the conditions of labor and of the poor, and started the movement for their improvement with the factory acts — a movement of altruism which has gone on with gathering force from that day to this, and the beneficence of which is even yet far

from exhausted. It was the spirit which convinced men that human slavery was a hideous anachronism, and which inspired the great conflict that in the Civil War in the United States preserved the Union, removed the darkest stain upon Western civilization, and widened the area of freedom. It was the spirit which brought the resurrection and liberation of Italy, and forced the establishment of constitutional government in many countries where the rights of the people were as yet unknown. The men of 1848 believed that if you could give every man a vote, an opportunity for education, set men free, and call the government a republic, all would be right with the world. We know now that there is no such panacea for human ills. We are well aware that the liberation of political development was only a limited phase of advance toward a better world. The sciences of anthropology and of archæology, the study in all forms of man as distinguished from men, the relentless research of history, have revealed the astonishing permanence of human nature and human desires. There have been made painfully clear to us the racial and climatic, anatomical and physical differences among men, thus demonstrating the existence of conditions which make social development seem as slow, almost, as the operation of geologic changes in the earth's surface. We have learned in a measure that the reforms and advances which laws can bring to pass appear so small that we can only with difficulty realize that they all help, and that every little rivulet goes to swell the mighty stream, even as the slow

processes of time and nature wear down the primeval rocks and transform the outlines of continents. The theories of Buckle have faded even from the memories of men, and no one now imagines that by environment and education a Hottentot can be turned into an Englishman. We are gradually learning not to confuse knowledge with original thought. That we vastly surpass our ancestors, near or remote, in knowledge is beyond question, but there is no evidence that we have better brains or greater unassisted intellectual power. We need take but one famous example from recorded history to prove this. No one would be bold enough to assert that we have ever produced men of greater intellect, or with a larger native strength in original thought, than the race who gave us Democritus of Abdera, originator of the atomic theory; Thales, who laid the foundations of geometry upon which Euclid built; Plato and Aristotle, who have influenced the thought of Western civilization and permeated the theology of both Christianity and Islam. All was the result of their own original thought unaided by accumulated knowledge, unhelped by any instruments or mechanical devices — all the work of pure reflection and sheer mental strength. These men I have mentioned are only four in the great group of Greeks who, especially in the Periclean age, carried every form of pure thought as well as all the arts — painting, sculpture, poetry, and the drama — to a point that, it may fairly be said, has not been surpassed in all the triumphs of the centuries since the Renaissance. Thus history has shown that in the

power and native strength of the human mind there has been no advance, although heaped-up knowledge, greatest of instruments, which has gone beyond all imaginings, is so often wrongly intermingled with our estimates of the unassisted human intellect.

And yet all this did not touch the heart of the question or the faith in progress which inspired Webster. He believed that he found in the Pilgrims of Plymouth as he recounted their history a complete harmony with the spirit which he represented, and which was to govern and direct the century which lay before him. History has shown, indeed, that he expected too much; that the men of the nineteenth century thought they could at once effect changes which really might require ages for their fulfilment; that they neither completely understood the lessons of the past nor perceived the limitations which the laws of nature set to the possible accomplishment of their own brief lives. But the central point was not reached. If it became clear that proof of a law of progress was lacking, it seemed to them equally obvious that there was no evidence of the negative — nothing to show that the progress of mankind in all directions might not continue. Whatever criticisms might be made, whatever limitations discovered, deep down at the very bottom was the fact that they were the exponents of a noble ideal which was in its essence nothing less than faith in the destiny of man.

So the century swept on and we are its children. It brought us to the point where the extended application

of international arbitration, the conventions of Geneva and of The Hague, made strong the hope that there could be no more great wars, and seemed at least to assure us that if any war unhappily should come, then such limitations had been established and such agreements made that the worst horrors of war would be either avoided or mitigated. These hopes, these dreams if you will, filled the minds of men. Then suddenly, without warning, there broke upon the Western World the greatest and the worst war ever known in a recorded history of six thousand years which had been filled with wars. Not only was it the greatest of wars, but when it came the powerful conventions of society, the comfortable fictions of daily existence, were rent and flung aside, and primitive man, even the savage of the Neanderthal period, began to show himself lurking behind the demure figure of nineteenth-century respectability. The difference was that the primitive instincts and passions were now equipped with all the methods of destruction which the latest and most advanced science could furnish. Germany had carried her purely materialistic conception of organization at home and dominion abroad to the highest point of perfection. How near she came to victory we know only too well. She fell upon a world which, except for the British Navy and the French Army, was unprepared. Reckless in her strength she finally did not hesitate to invade and trample on the rights of the United States until she forced us into the field. Her preparation was marvellously complete, her efficiency unrivalled —

and she failed. All the nations arrayed against her were largely under the materialistic influences which were so powerful in that phase of nineteenth-century progress, and which had forgotten the real and informing spirit of the time; confounded material progress with that of intellect and character, and made the cash basis loom large upon man's horizon. As Disraeli said, "The European talks of progress because by the aid of a few scientific discoveries he has established a society which has mistaken comfort for civilization." The mistake was not confined to Europe, and the confusion of thought which it implies both as to science and civilization was world-wide. Fortunately, none of the other nations which fought against Germany were wholly under material control. When in presence of a dire peril their love of independence, of liberty, of freedom of thought, and of humanity between men and nations rose supreme. They preferred to suffer and die rather than lose these precious possessions, or sink into slavery and vassalage before a seeker of world dominion. So inspired they won, and the German scheme of world conquest went down in ruin.

Now as a result we face an exhausted and almost prostrate world, with suggestions in Asia of world conquest, while in another region a savage despotism which has replaced the autocracy of the Czars is threatening the destruction of all civilization. But that which most concerns us here is not the economic conditions, formidable and difficult as those are, or even the physical dangers which

so darken and overcloud the future. It is in the realm of ideas that the most significant manifestations are always to be found as well as the solution of the problems, if there be one, for in the end ideas reign and thought will govern the world.

The inalienable companion of the spirit of progress — of the law of progress, if there is one, as the nineteenth century believed — is optimism, which is not a system of philosophy, but a state of mind. The hope for continuous moral and intellectual progress could not otherwise exist, but now, born of the great war and its legacies, the mental and emotional condition known as pessimism is rising up, looking us in the eyes and calling upon us to face the hard facts of history and of the world about us. Read the books and articles which are appearing daily in France and Germany and Italy and you will hear the note of pessimism ever waxing louder and more distinct. If it is said that it could hardly be otherwise among people who have just emerged from such an awful experience as theirs, one can only reply that this is their view, and their personal equation does not alter the fact of their opinion being as it is.

Turn to Spain, a neutral country not ravaged by war. Recently I read an article by Señor Baldomero Argente from the "Heraldo" of Madrid. It begins in this way: "Faith in indefinite progress is merely another way of expressing our limited vision. We see that the world has been going forward during our lifetime, and assume that it will continue to do so. But I am convinced that our

present civilization is about to perish the way earlier civilizations have perished. Men may say that then we shall have a new civilization better and grander than the previous one. But are they sure that the present civilization is better than the civilization which preceded it?" He then goes on to trace the earlier civilizations which have risen, flourished, and decayed; points to the wave of gross materialism now flooding the world, the restlessness and extravagance of a civilization rotten to the core; and concludes, after admitting that a new civilization may arise and fall, "But the time will come when the people will no longer have the strength to revolt, and the nations of Europe will disappear one after another, never to revive until after a long night of barbarism." Here is not only a complete denial of the nineteenth-century belief, but a profound scepticism as to whether there has been any real progress in the past, or that the civilization now tottering is the best. Go to England. There has recently been published a book by Mr. J. B. Bury, Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, one of the ablest, most learned, and most eminent of English historians, entitled the "Idea of Progress." At about the same time and with the same title appeared the Romanes lecture by Dean Inge, a brilliant writer and one of the most distinguished leaders among the clergy of the Church of England. Each in his own way comes to like conclusions. Professor Bury declares that the search for a law of progress has failed, and that the existence of such a law is wholly unproved; and Dr.

Inge thinks that the laws of nature neither promise progress nor forbid it, but that assured belief in it is a nearly outworn form of optimism. Here from these two eminent men is a flat negation of what the nineteenth century devoutly believed. In our own country there is a stronger hope in the popular conception of progress, and better apparent grounds for it, perhaps, than in any other; but as the months have slipped by since the war no observant man can deny that there is a growing doubt, a rising tide of pessimism, among those who think and who are the first to see and to weigh the chances of the future. This situation, showing so strongly this tendency of thought in Western civilization, is a very solemn one, not to be disregarded or lightly brushed aside. Webster turned to the great landmark set up by the exiles from England on this spot in 1620, and as he studied and depicted them and their deeds he saw nothing but stimulation and encouragement, and naught but harmony with the spirit of progress — the spirit of his own time which he so largely embodied and illustrated in after years.

This was the message of the Pilgrims to him and to his age as they read it. What do they say to us, not in the dawn of a young hope everywhere for a new and better world, not in the heyday of the idea of continuous progress, but after six years of trial marked by an intensity and severity hitherto unknown, in an hour of darkness and doubt beset with perils which no man can measure or foresee? What meaning have the Pilgrims to us who have one and all been bred up in the nine-

teenth-century spirit, who, carried away by the vast material progress of the past century, for the most part looking no further than the physical effects and thinking too little of the higher meanings, now find ourselves beset by doubts, surrounded by dangers, and with the theory of life which seemed so fixed and permanent trembling in the balance? What has the foundation of New Plymouth, so full of the inspiration of hope to Webster and his time, to say to us as we look about us in this troubled and desolated world?

As the little group of men and women who gathered here in 1620 stand out before us, very luminous in the pages of history, they have a stern, an austere, look, due perhaps in a measure to our own consciousness of what they believed and what they suffered and did. No doubt they lived and toiled and loved and married and were given in marriage and met the little events hurrying on from day to day, much as human nature in all ages has commanded. But it is to be feared that they did not face all these daily incidents of life with a smile. To them life was very serious; perhaps a safer conception than the other extreme, which finds money and amusement and restless movement the most desirable objects of existence. But whether light-hearted or grave, the Pilgrims encountered the demands of life with unfailing courage, a quality always essential, never more so than when the clouds hang low and the minds of men are filled with apprehension. They had a very strong and active sense of public duty. It is possible that by their example they

can on this point teach us something. Just at present there seems a great deal of concern about rights, and a tendency to forget the duties which rights must always bring with them, and without which rights become worthless and cannot be maintained. They were never so absorbed in their personal affairs as to forget those which concerned the public — the public meaning to them the entire body of men and women who had come to the New World together. In this spirit, before they founded and established their little state, they drew up and signed the famous compact of the Mayflower — a very memorable deed, this voluntary act. They combined themselves into "a civil body politick," and agreed to make laws in accordance therewith, and to those laws and "offices" they promised "all due submission and obedience." It was a very simple little statement expressed in very few words. It is quite true that all that is vital in the compact may be found in Robinson's farewell letter received at Southampton, or in the patent itself. The Pilgrims may not have originated either the words or the principles of the compact, although the principles embodied were few and the words not many. But the fact remains that they had thought enough about government to agree upon these principles and be guided by them. It was only an agreement, if you please, but they made it. The act was theirs. They gave life to the thought. After all deductions made, here was a constitution of government which is in its essence an agreement among those who accept it, made by the people them-

selves — an idea which has travelled far and wide, even to the ends of the earth and around the habitable globe since the Mayflower lay at anchor off Provincetown. Here, too, written in this same small paper was the proclamation of democracy, something which had quite faded away in Europe, and had never before been declared in the American hemisphere. The election of municipal officers was common enough in England, familiar no doubt to all the signers of the compact. What was of vital importance and entire novelty was that the signers of the compact arranged for their rulers and representatives in a new and unoccupied country. In an unknown land, with no surrounding pressure from an established society and an old civilization, when each man could easily have broken away and sought for license and opportunity to do his own will, especially as they had founded their settlement outside the territorial limits of the patent, they promised to obey the laws made and accepted by the community. Each and every man of them sacrificed a part of his own liberty that all might be free. "Liberty," said Georges Clemenceau, a great man of our own time, "liberty is the power to discipline one's self," and this was the spirit which inspired the Englishmen who signed the Mayflower compact. No greater principle than this could have been established, for it is the cornerstone of democracy and civilization. They knew that there could be no organized society unless laws made by the state were obeyed by all, and this mighty principle they planted definitely in the soil of

their new country, where it has found its latest champion in a successor of Bradford and Winslow, the present Governor of Massachusetts. It was their palladium and it must be ours, also, for when it is reft from any state or nation the end of civilization in any form conceivable by us is at hand. The men of Plymouth thought and thought connectedly about government. In their new home they seem to have had, and very naturally, an impulse toward a larger action by society as a whole, and they tried communism in regard to land and its development. Their native caution led them to limit the period of experiment, and when the time expired they abandoned it. You can find the story told in Bradford. Economically and socially they decided it to be a failure, an obstacle to advancement and in conflict with human nature, and they let it go without a pang. They decided that the right of man to private property honestly obtained was essential to social stability and to civilization. As in very adverse circumstances they managed to succeed, there is something here worthy of consideration in these days filled with the noise of destructive, clamorous, and ancient remedies for all human ills.

Some twenty years later they joined the group of adjacent colonies and formed the New England Confederation, the first effort in the direction of that Union of States which was to make the United States and create a nation continent-wide in its scope. To have been the first to proclaim democracy, and one of the first to engage in the opening attempt to unite scattered states in a nation, is

an impressive record for the handful of men and women who landed from the Mayflower three hundred years ago. The underlying and the lasting causes which made the action of the Pilgrims a decisive event in history seem to me more than ever, as I enumerate them, to be not what they did with their ships and farms, their trade and their fisheries, but with their minds and with their thoughts.

In these days of celebration, when public attention is strongly drawn to the Pilgrims, the voice of detraction is not stilled. There are always people, few happily in number, but very vocal, who cannot bear to acknowledge greatness, and to whom genius seems an offence. They seek in literature and in history to bring those whom men reverence and celebrate down to their own level. They search for the flaws, the errors, the shortcomings, and forget that those are not what concern us. No one regards the Pilgrims as perfect. They themselves had no such conception. They had a very deep and intimate conviction of sin. But what matters is their greatness, not their littleness. They did a great deed; there it stands, ineffaceable and beyond forgetfulness. They fought a good fight; they made mistakes and some other things besides. They had strong characters and unyielding courage. They had deep convictions. They were close kin to Macaulay's Puritan. "He prostrated himself in the dust before his Maker; but he set his foot upon the neck of his king." Whatever their failings, however simple, uneducated, and undistinguished the mass of

them may have been, they did a mighty work, and their work lives after them. The conquerors of untrodden continents, the founders of great nations, are not so common as unduly to crowd the highways of history, and when we meet with them it is wiser, more wholesome, to venerate them for what they did than to belittle them because they were not perfect in all the details of life demanded by their critics in the much-abused name of the truth of history which the Pilgrims would have been the last to fear.

Yet the greatest of all still remains behind. The founders of New Plymouth came here to find freedom to worship God in their own way. They sought to preserve their race, their allegiance to their native country, and their language, but their religious freedom was the primary object to which all material purposes, all hope of bettering their worldly condition, were entirely subordinate. In 1597 some of their forerunners petitioned to be allowed to settle in Canada, and wished to go because there "we may not onlie worship God as we are in conscience persuaded by his word but also doe unto her majestie and our country great good service." So comes the voice of a quarter of a century before. Listen now to what Bradford says on the eve of the final landing, and you feel in every line the great aspiration of their souls:

"May not and ought not the children of these fathers rightly say: *Our faithers were Englishmen which came over this great ocean, and were ready to perish in this willdernes, but they cried unto the Lord, and he heard their*

voyce, and looked on their adversitie, etc. Let them therfore praise the Lord, because he is good, and his mercies endure for ever."

Whatever our beliefs or disbeliefs, here is a very noble and beautiful spirit, a very fine and lofty courage, to be reverentially admired of all men, and which can never be out of fashion. It matters not whether we agree with their theology or with their forms of Christian worship. That which counted then and has counted ever since was that they set the spiritual above the material, the possessions of the mind and heart above those which ministered to the body and made life easier and more comfortable. They builded herein better than they knew. The object immediately before them was freedom to worship God in their own way which had been denied to them in their native country. That of which they were not conscious was the corollary of their great aspiration, when once fulfilled, that all other men must also be free to worship God in their own several ways. Their powerful neighbors of Massachusetts Bay, coming with a like purpose, resisted for half a century the inevitable result with all the fierce energy of earnest men strong both in character and intellect, and failed. When the Pilgrims achieved their purpose through much sacrifice and suffering they opened the door to the coming of freedom of conscience, and freedom of conscience meant freedom of thought upon everything within the mental range of humanity. Of all the possessions painfully won by the race of men throughout the centuries nothing approaches either in

value or in meaning the right of each and every man and woman to think his own thoughts in his own way. Can we longer wonder that the coming of the Pilgrims to these shores towers ever higher as a decisive event in history, for the battles won in the fields of thought make all other battles look small, indeed, as the procession of the centuries moves slowly by.

Webster saw the greatness of the Plymouth achievement; he saw the progress in things material and in knowledge of the historic world, and, above all, he saw the progress which had come in his own land from the labors, the deeds, and the principles of the Pilgrims who set forth from Leyden. Apparently, as I have already pointed out, he did not see, or if he saw he did not draw, the distinction between historic progress in arts, science, and knowledge and a law of progress which was to be the fine flower and the overruling influence in the century which he represented and wherein he was to play so distinguished a part. To the Pilgrims the very idea of a law of progress was unknown. Even their great contemporary Francis Bacon, who prepared the way for it, never accepted or formulated it. But they faced the world as they found it and did their best. The sustaining power of the nineteenth century, which was faith in the continuous progress of mankind on the earth, was not theirs. But whether there is a law of progress or not, these Pilgrims of Plymouth stand forth exemplars of certain great principles which never can grow old and which can never be of better service than in days of doubt and trouble

such as now beset the world. On one great point they made their meaning clear. They never confused moral and economic values; they never set material advance above the higher qualities of heart and mind. They never for a moment thought that life and its mysteries could be expressed in economic terms, which seems, if not actually avowed, to be the tendency among all classes to-day. They set character first. They reverenced learning and did homage to intellectual achievement. They succeeded marvellously. As we look at the world to-day, at what it seeks and what it apparently longs to be, is there not a great lesson to be learned and followed by us as it shines forth in the aspirations and deeds of these plain people whom here we celebrate? The wild new land, the unconquered wilderness which gave them the freedom they sought, seized with surprising quickness upon the deepest affections of their heart. It seems as if they said that here and not elsewhere will we live and strive —

> Until at last this love of earth reveals
> A soul beside our own, to quicken, quell,
> Irradiate, and through ruinous floods uplift.

A noble aspiration always, and when the "ruinous floods" came, as they did, these Pilgrims still pressed on, won through, and lifted up the cause for which they came, in the land they had made their own.

In all probability they still held to the belief of the Ancient World and of the Middle Ages that our minute planet was the centre of the universe, to which, if I am

not mistaken, Francis Bacon, regardless of Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo, still adhered. The earth was all they had, and brief life was here their portion as it is with us. Yet they did not live in vain. They strove to do their best on earth and to make it, so far as they could in their short existence, a better place for their fellowmen. They were not slothful in business, working hard and toiling in their fields and on the stormy northern seas. They sought to give men freedom both in body and mind. They tried to reduce the sum of human misery, the suffering inseparable from human existence. Whatever our faith, whatever our belief in progress, there can be no nobler purposes for man than thus to deal with the only earth he knows and the fragment of time awarded him for his existence here. As we think of them in this the only true way, our reverence and our admiration alike grow ever stronger. We turn to them in gratitude, and we commend what they did and their example to those who come after us. While the great Republic is true in heart and deed to the memory of the Pilgrims of Plymouth it will take no detriment even from the hand of Time.

THE END

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